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UNCLAS SAN JOSE 002451

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN JASON MACK

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CS](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER PRESIDENT CALDERON RELEASED FROM HOUSE ARREST

REF: A. SAN JOSE 2412

[1](#)B. SAN JOSE 646 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)1. As presaged in Reftel A, former President Rafael Angel Calderon (1990-94) was released from house arrest on October 19, 2005, under conditions similar to those imposed on ex-President Miguel Angel Rodriguez. Specifically, Calderon is prohibited from leaving the country or having any contact with witnesses or co-defendants, and must appear in court every fifteen days. In another parallel to the Rodriguez case, Calderon was released two days shy of his one year anniversary in preventative detention. Calderon was arrested on October 22, 2004, and held in La Reforma prison until March, 2005, when he was transferred to house arrest at his own domicile. Calderon is under investigation for corruption and influence peddling for allegedly receiving some USD 9 million as a "consulting fee" for helping to broker a loan for medical equipment purchases from Finland. No formal charges have yet been filed.

COMMENT

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[1](#)2. With the release of Rodriguez and Calderon at the outset of national election season, it is unclear what role, if any, the two former presidents will play in the national debate. Ricardo Toledo, the candidate from the ex-presidents' Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC), has been unable to muster strong support within the party, and as a result is currently drawing only seven percent of likely voters in recent polls. This is not likely to change, as Calderon, who continues to wield considerable power within the party, is unlikely to back Toledo. He (and possibly Rodriguez) might, however, play a role in legislative elections. With their release, they have become marginally less damaged goods, and could work behind the scenes to consolidate party support for PUSC aspirants to the Legislative Assembly. But even under the rosier of such scenarios, the party would not win more than ten seats in the 57-member body, substantially down from the 19 that PUSC won in the last election.

FRISBIE